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New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support: causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Follow-up to the commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations: cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union

Letter dated 25 May 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to address you regarding today's observance of Africa Day, a date that is of great importance not only for the countries of Africa but also for the whole international community and the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for the present letter, and the attached message marking this important celebration, to be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 62 (b), 116 and 122 (a) (see annex).

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Rodolfo **Benítez Versón**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 25 May 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Message on the occasion of Africa Day

New York, 25 May 2011

The celebration of Africa Day today, 25 May, brings special joy to Cuba. It also provides a timely opportunity to reiterate the importance of the United Nations doing more for Africa. Africa needs the United Nations and the United Nations needs Africa.

The peoples of Africa have a right to sustainable development and peace. They need human capital formation and access to markets and technologies, not paternalism. They do not need lessons on what is best for them. They need resources and solidarity.

Cuba considers it vital to continue working within the United Nations to change the current deeply unfair and unsustainable international order, in which powerful multinationals jostle for control of the mineral resources of the African continent and the rich countries, with some exceptions, fail to meet their modest official development assistance commitments and cling to the unjust patent and trade regime that hinders the development of the African nations.

Africa is an essential part of our own history as Cubans. In the words of President Raúl Castro: "Africa is not a legend distant in space and time ... it is dignity, sacrifice, courage and endurance."

Cuba deeply appreciates its African roots. The Cuban people are direct heirs to the bravery, courage and resilience of Africa, which, as a victim of colonial exploitation and despoilment, has struggled heroically for centuries to overcome threats and challenges that still persist.

Our cultural wealth and distinctive identity are, to a large extent, an expression of the cultural heritage of the African peoples, who enriched us with their wisdom, traditions, language, religious beliefs, music, temperament and spirit of defiance.

The historical links between Africa and Cuba date back over five centuries. Cuba was one of the first colonies to receive African slaves. Between 1503 and 1873, more than one and a half million enslaved Africans were transported to our island from the coasts of Africa, or resold from the Americas and the Caribbean. The bravery and courage of the slaves who rose up against exploitation nourished the freedom-loving spirit and sense of independence of the Cuban people.

Thanks to its strong internationalist convictions, the Cuban Revolution has always shown solidarity for Africa, ranging from unconditional support for anti-colonialist struggles to cooperation projects in many areas of its economic and social development.

In line with its internationalist vocation, the Cuban Revolution provided direct support for the national liberation movements in Algeria, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde; defended the territorial integrity of Ethiopia and Angola; and made a decisive contribution to the achievement of Namibia's independence and the end of apartheid

in South Africa. For almost three decades, 380,000 Cubans fought on the African continent to defend the integrity and sovereignty of sister countries, returning from Africa with only the remains of their fallen comrades and the honour of having done their duty.

From the 1960s to date, more than 79,000 Cubans — including over 24,000 in the area of health care — have engaged in civilian cooperation in 31 African countries.

The theme of the African Union summit to be held this year in Malabo, the capital city of Equatorial Guinea, is "accelerating youth empowerment for sustainable development", for which education is vital.

Cuba provides collaborative services in 31 African countries, through a total of 4,259 aid workers, including 1,427 health workers. Some 15 Cuban agencies and institutions are involved in running the programmes currently in operation.

The "Yes, I Can" programme is being implemented in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Namibia and Nigeria, countries where 941,054 citizens are currently taking classes. By 7 April 2011, a total of 1,723,870 people in those countries had been taught to read and write. The programme was recently contextualized in Swahili for use in Tanzania. Agreements for its implementation in that country are in the process of being signed.

By the 2008/09 academic year, a total of 31,486 African scholarship students from 45 countries had successfully completed studies in Cuba. At present, 2,520 young Africans from 45 countries are studying in our country.

In the area of sports, 54 coaches and specialists are providing services in 12 African countries, while 229 students from the region are attending the International School for Physical Education and Sport in Havana.

Our country will continue to share its human capital and experience, as it has done to date, through cooperation with many African countries.

Africa has never abandoned Cuba. In the more than 50 years since the unjust and cruel economic, commercial and financial blockade was first imposed on our country, the Governments and peoples of Africa have closed ranks 19 times in the General Assembly to demand the right of the Cuban people to determine their own destiny and live free of the unjust blockade.

The sister countries of Africa will always be able to count on the everlasting friendship, solidarity, generosity, gratitude and full support of Cuba.